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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7141
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4398
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1681
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1683
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3895
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4312
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 8869
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001795

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STATE FOR WHA/AND L.PETRONI

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TAGS: [ASCH](#) [APER](#) [AMGT](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)

SUBJECT: MORE ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

REF: LA PAZ 1711

Classified By: Amb. David N. Greenlee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Following the GOB's June 22 announcement of its plan to "decolonize" and secularize education (reftel), pressure from the Catholic Church led the Morales administration to soften its position at least as regards Church interests. The GOB hosted a seminar June 26-28 on its proposed reforms but provided few details, instead deferring discussion to an educational congress scheduled for July. On June 29, the Ambassador contacted the Archbishops of Santa Cruz and La Paz and the Papal Nuncio to express U.S. support for private and religious schools' autonomy over their curricula. The timing of the GOB's education reform initiative, like all government policies announced in the past few weeks, is likely intended to secure votes for the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party in the July 2 Constituent Assembly election. We will continue to coordinate with affected diplomatic community and private and religious educational interests as we engage with the GOB on this sensitive issue. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Following the GOB's June 22 announcement of its plan to "decolonize" and secularize education (reftel), La Paz Archbishop Edmundo Abastoflor and El Alto Bishop Jesus Juarez met with President Morales June 24 to convey their concerns. In response, both Morales and Vice President Garcia Linera publicly affirmed their Catholic faith, thus softening the GOB's position on religious education. Morales declared himself a Catholic who also respects indigenous religions and said he hoped the Pope would do the honors when he marries. Since June 24, the GOB has repeatedly stated its respect for religion.

¶3. (SBU) The GOB hosted a seminar June 26-28 on the proposed reforms but provided few details, instead deferring discussion to an educational congress in Sucre, tentatively scheduled for July. The GOB stated that it would not abolish private schools but proposed GOB control of both public and private schools' curricula, which it said should be "uniform." The GOB proposal includes an increase in indigenous teachers and trilingual education (Spanish, one

indigenous language, and one foreign language) and asserts that religious curricula should be optional. Representatives from the American Cooperative School (also known as Calvert), who attended without invitation, were not allowed to participate.

¶4. (C) On June 29, the Ambassador called the Archbishop of Santa Cruz, Cardinal Julio Terrazas, to express U.S. support for private and religious schools' autonomy over their curricula and convey solidarity with the Catholic Church's position in this context. The Cardinal was pleased to learn of explicit White House interest in the issue. Terrazas said the Church had received mixed signals from the GOB, but that Vice President Garcia Linera had assured him that all reform initiatives would be subject to dialogue and none would be issued by Supreme Decree. The Ambassador also conveyed U.S. concerns to the Papal Nuncio, Ivo Scapolo, and Archbishop of La Paz Abastoflor in person on June 29. Abastoflor said that when he met with Morales, the president was nonconfrontational and seemingly flexible.

¶5. (C) Comment: The GOB's education reform, like all government policies announced in the past few weeks, is likely intended to secure votes for the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party in the July 2 Constituent Assembly election. We will continue to coordinate closely with affected diplomatic community and school entities and will press for balance in our dialogue with the highest levels of the GOB. End comment.
GREENLEE